

Testimony
on the
District of Columbia Office on Aging
2004 Fiscal Year Budget Request
Before the
District of Columbia Council
Committee on Human Services
Sandra (Sandy) Allen, Chairperson

and

Members:

David A. Catania (At Large)

Jim Graham (Ward 1)

Phil Mendelson (At Large)

Carol Schwartz (At Large)

Presented by

E. Veronica Pace, Executive Director

In the Council Chambers

Monday, March 24, 2003

9:00am – 11:00am

Good morning Chairperson Sandra Allen and members of the Committee on Human Services, my name is E. Veronica Pace and I am the Executive Director of the DC Office on Aging.

With me at the table today are Mr. Sam Gawad, Compliance and Administration Manager and Mrs. Alethea Campbell, Chairperson of the DC Commission on Aging. I want to thank you, Madame Chair and the members of the Human Services Committee for your support of older Washingtonians and the mission of the Office on Aging.

I am pleased to testify before you on Mayor Anthony A. Williams' Fiscal Year 2004 Budget Request for the Office on Aging. This budget proposes \$20,875,769 in total funding and supports 26 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. This change represents a 0.43% funding increase from the FY 03 approved budget and no change in FTEs.

- In local funds, this budget proposes \$14,927,000 in funding and supports 14 FTEs.
- In federal funds, this budget proposes \$5,669,000 in funding and supports 9 FTEs.

- In Intra-District funds, this budget proposes \$280,000 in funding and 3 FTEs.

The staff of 26 FTEs has remained constant since FY 2000. We are proud of the fact that the Office on Aging's administrative costs remain at eight percent (8%) of its total operating budget.

As you know the Office on Aging was established as a separate government agency in 1975 by D.C. Law 1-24. Since then, the Office on Aging has continued to strengthen its framework of support and service to District seniors. Its transition into Performance Based Budgeting in FY 2004, further aligns the agency with the Citywide Strategic Priority area of Strengthening Children, Youth, Families, and Elders.

The Office on Aging funds 25 different types of services for the dependent, semi-dependent, and independent elderly through grants and contracts to community based non-profit agencies and for profit providers. There are 91,878 seniors in the District of Columbia, which represents about 16 percent of the total DC population. During FY 2002, this office provided 97,156 service contacts to District seniors.

The DC Office on Aging advocates on behalf of seniors and oversees a comprehensive and coordinated network of senior health and social services. It organizes community forums, outreach activities, and focus groups to inform senior citizens about the quality of services and programs, and the need to expand or modify current programs. In FY 2004, the Office on Aging will continue to promote healthy independent senior lifestyles and sensitize the public to the aging process. In addition, the agency will continue to produce special events, brochures, and a monthly newsletter in the Senior Beacon called Spotlight on Aging.

The Office on Aging also works closely with the providers of the Senior Service Network. The Network includes a 262-bed nursing home, two group homes, a community residential facility, six lead agencies covering all eight wards of the District, 16 multi-purpose senior centers, 58 nutrition centers, assessment and case management sites, geriatric day care programs, literacy sites, the long-term care ombudsman program, programs for homemaker services, home-delivered meals, a shelter for the abused and exploited seniors, a senior center for the elderly homeless, a transportation system, and three wellness centers. Among our many partnerships/collaboratives are:

The University of the District of Columbia's Institute of Gerontology, the DC Department of Parks and Recreation and AARP.

The Office on Aging administers the provisions of the Federal Older Americans Act as amended, (P.L. 100-175), monitors and assesses the service delivery system operated by the community-based non-profits on a regular basis under performance based grants and coordinates activities with the DC Commission on Aging and other organizations to ensure that resources are used effectively.

The agency plans to fulfill its mission by achieving the following strategic result goals:

- Improve the quality of programs as measured by the percent of providers meeting standardized performance outcomes.
- Improve access to consumer information and assistance for District seniors in the areas of employment, education, and health and social services within the Office on Aging as measured by customer surveys, job placements, number of people served or percent of population served, and number of wellness centers.

- Enhance elder caregiver and strengthen family support options as measured by number of caregivers participating in the Caregiver Institute.
- Introduce seniors and the general public to aging issues through special events and public service announcements.

Programs

The DC Office on Aging operates the following four programs:

In-Home and Continuing Care Program:

The In-home and Continuing Care Program provides in-home and day care services and caregiver support to District residents aged 60 and over and their caregivers so that seniors can remain in their homes and caregivers can continue to provide care. The two activities within this program include:

- In-Home and Continuing Care Services – This activity provides day care, homemaker, nutrition, and case management services to frail District residents 60 years and older so they can remain in their homes, and

- Caregivers Support – This activity provides caregiver education, respite, stipends and transportation services to eligible caregivers so they can continue to provide care.

Examples of in-home services include homemaker services, home-delivered meals, caregiver support, and heavy housecleaning.

Community Based Support Program:

The Community Based Support Program provides residential facilities, elder rights assistance, health promotion, wellness, and community services to District residents aged 60 and older so they can live independently in the community, and minimize institutionalization and to administer and monitor the provision of those services. Activities within this program include:

- Health Promotion and Wellness – This activity provides physical fitness, health screenings, and wellness information services to District residents 60 and over so

they can increase their awareness of and adopt healthy behaviors.

- Elder Rights Assistance – This activity provides legal representation, advocacy, and assistance services to eligible DC residents 60 years and older or their legal representatives so they can have legal issues addressed in a timely manner.
- Community Service – This activity provides nutrition, transportation, socialization, and counseling support services to District residents 60 or older so they can maintain an active independent lifestyle.
- Supportive Residential Facilities – This activity provides housing, advocacy, and supportive services to District residents 60 and older who cannot live independently and/or have limited housing options so they can be safe and receive care that meets their needs.

These activities provide a framework to maintain the health of older people, eliminate isolation, support self-care and functional independence, and protect the rights of older persons. Examples of such services are senior centers, nutrition centers, counseling, nutrition education, socialization, literacy, geriatric day care, geriatric assessment/case management services, emergency shelter for abused and exploited seniors, and elder rights assistance.

Consumer Information, Assistance and Outreach

Program:

The Consumer Information and Assistance and Outreach Program provides aging information and assistance, advocacy, special events, training and education and employment services to District residents and caregivers so they can be informed about aging issues and maintain independence. This program links seniors to services and helps them to recognize the worth and contributions of the elderly to their community and promote healthy life styles through sponsorship of special events.

Activities include:

- Employment Services – This activity provides employment assistance services to District residents at least 55 years of age who are seeking employment so they can gain and maintain employment.
- Information and Assistance – This activity provides aging-related information, counseling, and referral services for persons 60 years or older so they can be connected to services they request.
- Special Events – This activity provides socialization, information and recognition services to DC residents 60 years and over so they can increase their awareness of services provided, expand their social network, and project a positive image of aging.
- Training and Education – This activity provides training services to seniors, service providers, and the general public so they can enhance their knowledge and increase their skills relating to elderly issues.

Agency Management Program:

The Agency Management Program provides the operational support to the agency so they have the necessary tools to achieve operational and programmatic results. This program is standard for all performance-based budgeting agencies.

Finally, I want to share with you several ongoing and new initiatives in the Office on Aging about which I am very excited. The DC Office on Aging Adult Abuse Prevention Committee, whose members represent various public and private agencies that are involved in adult abuse prevention and intervention activities, has planned two new initiatives that focus on educating consumers and senior advocates on areas of potential fraud related to pre-paid funeral accounts, life insurance, long term care insurance, and car loans. This initiative is in partnership with AARP/Legal Counsel for the Elderly. The Committee, in partnership with the DC Department of Banking and Financial Institutions, is also sponsoring a workshop for fringe financial service providers to encourage them to be aware of and report to the proper authorities possible financial fraud among their elderly

customers. Legal Counsel for the Elderly recently produced an excellent videotape for seniors and providers on predatory lending.

Last year, we established a District of Columbia Caregivers' Institute as a resource for informal, unpaid caregivers who have assumed the responsibility of caring for a friend or relative who is unable to care for themselves. As you heard from two caregivers today, the Institute has been an invaluable resource for caregivers who need respite from and support in their caregiving responsibilities. Currently there are nearly 50 caregivers participating in the Institute. Last fall we recognized these caregivers with a luncheon during National Caregivers' Month. Just last Tuesday, the Caregivers' Institute held a telephone support group with 12 caregivers and a representative from the Alzheimer's Association. We even had four men participating in this support group! We've found that typically caregivers don't want to leave the person they're caring for to attend a support group. But when we hold these support groups via telephone conference calls we get good participation and they serve the purpose for which they were intended – to provide

much-needed information and much-needed relief for the caregiver.

When I appeared before you on Monday, February 24th, in this chamber to report on the FY 2002 performance and the FY 2003 spending, I detailed specific accomplishments such as the delivery of the 1.3 million nutritious mid-day meals to nearly ten thousand elderly Washingtonians, and the provision of 115,201 one-way trips to medical and other life-supporting appointments and services. With the FY 2004 proposed total budget of \$20,875,000, the Office on Aging will continue to provide congregate meals which are communal meals in a group setting, home-delivered meals, transportation, advocacy, adult daycare, comprehensive assessment case management, core counseling, employment, health insurance counseling, health promotion, heavy housecleaning, independent living skills, information and assistance, legal services, outreach, literacy training, long-term care, nutrition counseling and education, ombudsman advocacy services for the blind, the hearing impaired, and the homeless, socialization, special events and health promotion,

disease prevention, and wellness programs and services. The numbers of seniors participating in these programs and services is detailed in our FY 2002 Report to the People.

In FY 2004, the Office on Aging expects to meet its performance goals and to fulfill its mission.

CAPITAL BUDGET:

Because the proposed Capital Budget for FY 2004 has not been finalized, I have not addressed it in today's testimony.

Again, we in the Office on Aging and the 91,878 seniors in the District of Columbia that we represent deeply appreciate Mayor Anthony A. Williams' and the Committee on Human Services' steadfast support of the Office on Aging and its mission to advocate, plan, implement, and monitor programs in health, education, employment, and social services that promote longevity, independence, dignity, and choice for our senior citizens.

This concludes my testimony. I am pleased to answer any questions you have and to provide you with follow-up information as well.